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ABSTRACT

In six separate reports issued between 1972 and 1979, the General Accounting Office (GAO) reported that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has great difficulty in administering education programs and had failed to provide Indians a quality education. To bring about improvement, Congress enacted the Education Amendments of 1978, Title XI of which provided a framework for correcting the severe educational and management deficiencies which have thwarted the delivery of quality education to Indians. Responding to Title XI, the BIA has taken a number of positive steps, including (1) involving the Indian community in planning and implementing a new system of educational services, (2) giving the Director, Office of Indian Education Programs, responsibility for and authority over its education programs, (3) developing new education standards to deal with academic needs, cultural differences, language skills, geographic isolation, and pupil-teacher ratios, and (4) developing a new management information system to provide more reliable information for Indian education programs. In view of these and other positive steps, the GAO feels that a transfer of the Bureau's education programs to the Department of Education should not be considered for at least three to four years. This would give the BIA a chance to demonstrate whether its current efforts will improve the academic achievement levels of Indian students. (Author/DS)

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BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL

Report To The Chairman,

Committee On Governmental Affairs

United States Senate

OF THE UNITED STATES

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Should The Bureau Of Indian Affairs Continue To Provide Educational Services To Indian Children?

GAO repeatedly reported during the 1970s that the Bureau of Indian Affairs failed to provide Indians a quality education, and that severe management problems had persisted for years. Recognizing the Bureau's poor performance, the Congress enacted title XI of the Education Amendments of 1978 to provide a framework for correcting the severe educational and management deficiencies which have thwarted the delivery of quality education to Indians.

The Bureau has responded to title XI by taking positive steps to correct its deficiencies; therefore, a transfer of the Bureau's education programs to the Department of Education would not be appropriate at this time.

If the Congress determines that the Bureau's new initiatives do not bring improvements in the academic achievement levels of Indian students within 3 or 4 years, other alternatives such as a transfer will have to be considered.

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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CED-80-72
APRIL 23, 1980

COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

B-164031

The Honorable Abraham A. Ribicoff
Chairman, Committee on Governmental
Affairs
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This report presents our position on transferring the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Indian education activities to the Department of Education. In view of the requirements placed on the Bureau by the Education Amendments of 1978, Public Law 95-561, and the positive steps the Bureau is in the process of taking to correct its educational and management deficiencies, we do not believe other alternatives for improving Indian education, such as transferring Bureau education activities to the Department of Education, would be appropriate at this time. As discussed in the report, a time period of at least 3 to 4 years would be needed to effectively measure changes in the academic achievement levels of Indian students.

We prepared this report in response to your August 1, 1979, and March 11, 1980, letters which were also signed by Senators Charles Percy and Henry Bellmon. As discussed with your office this report does not comment on the potential impact a transfer would have on most of those issues mentioned in your August letter because it would be speculative on our part, especially since the Department of Education has not yet been fully organized and does not have any experience in operating schools.

We obtained oral comments from the Department of the Interior and have incorporated them in the report where appropriate.

This report is also being sent today to Senators Percy and Bellmon. Copies are being sent to the Director, Office of Management and Budget, and the Secretary of the Interior. Copies are also being sent to interested parties and will be made available to others on request.

Sincerely yours,

Comptroller General
of the United States

JUN 20 1980

COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S
REPORT TO THE CHAIRMAN,
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL
AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

SHOULD THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS CONTINUE TO PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES TO INDIAN CHILDREN?

D I G E S T

A transfer of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' education programs to the Department of Education should not be considered for at least 3 to 4 years. This will provide the Bureau a chance to demonstrate whether its current efforts will improve the academic achievement levels of Indian students.

During the 1970s GAO repeatedly reported that the Bureau was not providing quality education to Indians and that its education programs were badly managed. Between 1972 and 1979, GAO issued six reports which showed that the Bureau had great difficulty in administering education programs and had been unable to achieve the national goal established by the Congress of providing the quantity and quality of educational services and opportunities necessary for Indian children to compete in careers of their choice.

To bring about improvements, the Congress enacted the Education Amendments of 1978. Title XI of the act addresses many of the recommendations in GAO reports. The act requires the Bureau to entirely revamp its organizational structure and programs. Many required changes have specific target dates for completion and most must be completed by the end of 1980.

For the first time, the Indian community is actively participating in the planning and implementation of a new system within the Bureau for delivering educational services to Indians. GAO believes this participation is imperative if the educational needs of Indian students are to be properly identified and effective programs designed to meet them.

To implement the provisions of title XI, the Bureau set up 12 task forces with Indian representatives to plan and design improvements required to provide quality education for Indians and to manage its programs effectively. The task forces have addressed or are addressing many of the deficiencies GAO reported during the 1970s. The Bureau has

--taken action to provide more effective leadership for its education programs by giving the Director, Office of Indian Education Programs, responsibility for and authority over its education programs (see pp. 7 to 9);

--taken steps to improve its planning and policy guidance by promulgating new policies, procedures, and practices in all areas of Indian education (see pp. 9 to 13);

--began developing new education standards to deal with academic needs, cultural differences, language skills, geographic isolation, and pupil-teacher ratios (see pp. 13 to 17);

--began developing a new management information system to provide more reliable information for Indian education programs (see pp. 17 to 19);

--revised its funding procedures by developing formulas for determining the funds needed to sustain Bureau and contract schools (see pp. 19 to 21);

--promulgated new regulations which should alleviate problems in its education personnel system and improve the hiring of education personnel (see pp. 22 to 23); and

--published a notice in the Federal Register describing the system to be used in setting school construction priorities and has begun developing a current project priority list (see pp. 23 to 25).

CONCLUSIONS

Title XI has resulted in the Bureau's taking some very positive actions to correct deficiencies in its educational delivery system. In view of these initiatives, it would be reasonable to give the Bureau an opportunity to see what it can accomplish. The bottom line however is whether the new initiatives bring about improvement in the academic achievement levels of Indian students. GAO believes that a time period of at least 3 to 4 years would be needed to effectively measure changes in the academic achievement levels of Indian students. This will provide at least 2 years of data in addition to the first full year of operations under title XI. If adequate progress is not made or cannot be measured because of inadequate testing criteria, GAO believes the Congress will have to seriously consider other alternatives for administering Indian programs, including taking the responsibility away from the Bureau. (See p. 25.)

AGENCY COMMENTS

Department officials stated that GAO's position that a transfer of the Bureau's education functions to the Department of Education would not be appropriate at this time was the only reasonable position. They pointed out that although title XI mandated many actions designed to improve Indian education, some important steps were initiated prior to the legislation. They stated that the Bureau had already begun developing better school construction priorities, a higher education management information system, and new programs for the handicapped. (See p. 26.)

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ABBREVIATIONS

BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
GAO	General Accounting Office
HEW	Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In an August 1, 1979, letter, Senator Abraham Ribicoff, Chairman, Committee on Governmental Affairs, and Senators Henry Bellmon and Charles Percy stated that because of the poor condition of Indian education and the fragmentation of Indian education programs between two Federal agencies, the concept of consolidating Federal Indian education programs into a single, coherent structure deserved a serious study by us. They pointed out that during the April floor debate on S. 210, Department of Education Organization Act of 1979, the committee agreed to request such a study. Legislation in the 95th Congress, S. 991, as reported from the Committee on Governmental Affairs, provided for transferring the educational functions of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to the Department of Education. The full Senate later voted, 47-39, to delete the proposed transfer from the bill. In 1979, S. 210, as passed, did not provide for a transfer. We agreed to determine if our recommendation that the Congress consider transferring responsibilities for administering Indian education programs to another Federal agency if adequate improvement is not made by BIA was still valid.

Since 1794, when the first treaty providing for any form of Indian education was signed, the Federal Government has had the primary responsibility for educating the American Indian, 1/ basically the Bureau of Indian Affairs. However, in the 20th century the States began sharing the responsibility for Indian education and currently provide schooling for the majority of elementary and secondary Indian students.

The Federal Government now spends over $500 million per year for the education of Indians. Funding is about equally divided between the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare's (HEW's) Office of Education. 2/

1/For purposes of this report the term "Indian" will apply to all Native Americans.

2/The Office of Education has been transferred to the Department of Education.

BIA operates 164 schools and 15 dormitories serving about 35,700 elementary and secondary students and provides funding for 45 schools, serving about 7,700 students, that are operated by Tribes or tribal organizations under contractual arrangements with BIA. In addition, BIA operates three postsecondary schools with an enrollment of about 1,400. During 1980, HEW will provide grants to 1,200 public school districts serving about 300,000 Indian students.

Appropriations for Indian education during fiscal year 1979 totaled about $262 million, of which $181 million was appropriated for BIA school operations. The remaining $81 million was for assistance to Indians in non-Federal schools, adult education, and higher education.

CONGRESSIONAL ACTION TO IMPROVE INDIAN EDUCATION

During the last decade, the Congress, because of national concern, enacted legislation specifically designed to improve the quality of Indian education. In 1972 the Indian Education Act, Title IV of Public Law 92-318, authorized new Indian education programs for public schools and higher education institutions. The 1972 act also established a National Advisory Council on Indian Education and an Office of Indian Education within the U.S. Office of Education.

On January 4, 1975, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, Public Law 93-638, was approved. In enacting this legislation, the Congress declared its commitment to maintain the Federal Government's continuing relationship with and responsibility to Indians through establishment of a meaningful Indian self-determination policy. This was to permit an orderly transition from Federal domination of programs for Indians to more effective and meaningful participation by Indians in planning, conducting, and administering programs and services provided by BIA.

On May 17, 1977, the American Indian Policy Review Commission, chaired by Senator James Abourezk, submitted its final report to the Congress which called for action "to right the wrongs done to Indian Tribes since the early days of this country." The report urged creation of a department of Indian affairs or an independent agency to take over functions now handled by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Health Service, and other agencies. In addition, the report included 23 recommendations for improving BIA's management of programs and services for Indians.

At the beginning of the 95th Congress, the House Committee on Education and Labor established an Advisory Study Group on Indian Education to conduct research into and propose legislation for improving Indian education. The committee's report, H.R. No. 95-1137, on the Education Amendments of 1978, H.R. 15, stated that the Study Group determined that:

> "* * *the following problems, documented by hearings and on-site inspections, require immediate remedial legislation: (1) the lack of Indian involvement and participating in both public and Bureau school programs; (2) the need for increased dollars to meet the higher cost of supplying basic education programs for Indian children; (3) the lack of adequate funding to meet the special needs of Indian students, both educational and cultural, preferably through the Indian Education Act of 1972; and (4) the lack of Congressional direction for a coordinated educational system within the Bureau of Indian Affairs."

The House report pointed out many management weaknesses demonstrating BIA's lack of direction. The specific weaknesses mentioned in the House report were:

> "(1) the absence of standards for either education programs or boarding facilities; (2) noneducators having the day to day control over education programs; (3) the absence of a centralized information system for Bureau education data; (4) the absence of standardization policies and procedures for accountability on the part of Bureau employees; (5) although there is a great need for school construction funding, little information on current construction needs exists within the Bureau; (6) a personnel system which breeds delays and vacancies in the recruitment of education personnel; and (7) the failure to distribute Bureau program funds on a basis of need. These inexcusable conditions exist despite repeated criticisms and recommendations for change made by government and private organizations stretching over a 50-year period."

The Congress has established an acceptable framework for dealing with these problems by approving title XI of the Education Amendments of 1978, Public Law 95-561, on November 1, 1978. Title XI provides for substantive, structural and procedural changes needed in BIA Indian education programs similar to those that we identified during the 1970s.

The Department of the Interior appointed a steering committee to begin planning for the implementation of title XI. As a result of this effort, BIA established 12 task forces to develop regulations, guidelines, formulas, and other actions in the following areas: impact aid; aid to public schools educating Indians; education standards; education functions; allotment formula and direct funding; school boards; personnel; management information systems; education policies; uniform procedures and practices; student rights and responsibilities; and higher education. Letters requesting nominations to the task forces were sent to tribal and Alaska Native leaders, major Indian organizations, BIA area offices, and the Congress. About 140 individuals including many Indians were selected for the task forces representing all geographic regions and having a mix of skills and expertise.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF REVIEW

In its August 1, 1979, request, the committee raised several questions pertaining to the potential effect a transfer of BIA's education functions to the Department of Education would have on: administrative and operational aspects of Indian education; Indian self-determination; the Federal "trust" relationship with Indians; Indian preference in staffing schools; and Indian culture. The committee was also interested in whether such a transfer would impact differently on schools located on reservations and those off reservations, especially boarding schools.

In talks with committee staff it was agreed that we would limit our review to a follow up of our prior reports on Indian education to determine if our recommendation that the Congress consider transferring responsibilities for administering Indian education programs to another Federal agency if adequate improvement is not made by BIA was still valid. This report states our position based on current congressional directives and BIA efforts to carry them out. It does not deal with the potential impact a transfer would have on those areas mentioned in the committee request because it would be speculative on our part, especially since the new Department of Education has not yet been fully organized and has no experience in operating schools.

In making our review we examined reports and documents and interviewed BIA, HEW, tribal officials, and Indian groups primarily located in the Washington, D.C., area. We reviewed applicable laws, regulations, bills, policies, procedures, and practices pertaining to the administration of BIA's school system to determine the status of BIA actions on the recommendations in our prior reports. We did not evaluate the adequacy of those educational policies, regulations, procedures and practices because BIA is in the process of revising its education organization structure and education policies, procedures, and practices. We also did not review the effectiveness of the education BIA schools provided. At the conclusion of our work, we discussed our draft report with Department of the Interior officials, and their oral comments have been considered.

CHAPTER 2

BIA EFFORTS TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES TO INDIAN CHILDREN

BIA has failed over the years to provide Indians a quality education. Our position is based on numerous reviews of BIA's educational activities during the 1970s. All of our reviews show that severe management problems have persisted for years. For example, in an April 1972 report, we told the Congress that although the educational achievement of Indian students appeared to be one of the most important keys to overcoming the problems Indians face, information at BIA schools revealed relatively little evidence of progress.

Commenting on the report, the Department of the Interior stated that our conclusions and recommendations would constructively support BIA's efforts to improve its Indian education programs. However, during a followup review we noted that as of January 1977, the problems identified in 1972 still existed and BIA had not taken actions to implement our recommendations.

Because of the continuing management problems, we stated in our January 1977 report that since BIA had not made any major progress in implementing policies, procedures, and programs to ensure that the educational needs of Indian students were met, the congressional committees should more intensively monitor BIA and, if adequate progress was not made, explore other alternatives such as transferring responsibilities for administering Indian education programs to another Government agency.

Between January 1977 and September 1979 we issued five additional reports which continued to show a lack of progress and that BIA has great difficulty in administering education programs. These reports pointed out weaknesses in higher education, boarding schools, school construction, special education for handicapped students, and aid to public schools educating Indians. As a result of BIA's continued management problems, the major national goal established by the Congress to provide the quantity and quality of educational services and opportunities which will permit Indian children to compete in the careers of their choice was no nearer to being achieved in 1979 than it was in 1972.

Recent events which the Congress has spearheaded indicate that for the first time, some very positive efforts

are being made which may bring about much needed improvement in the delivery of education services to Indian students. The Congress took significant action to improve BIA's education programs by passing the Education Amendments of 1978 to improve Federal educational programs. Title XI of the act addresses many of the recommendations in our reports. The act requires BIA to entirely revamp its organizational structure and programs to ensure more effective delivery of educational services to Indians. Many of these required changes have specific target dates for completion and most of the changes must be completed by the end of 1980.

Regarding these changes, it should be noted that for the first time, the Indian community is actively participating in the planning and implementation of a new system within BIA for delivering educational services to Indians. We believe this participation is imperative if educational needs of Indian students are to be properly identified and effective programs designed to meet these needs. Implementation of these provisions which is being closely monitored by the Congress can result in more effective delivery of educational services to Indians.

Our prior findings, the provisions of the 1978 act affecting them, and the status of BIA efforts to implement the provisions are discussed in the remaining sections of this report.

ORGANIZATION, AUTHORITY, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The magnitude and complexity of the Indian education problems make it essential for BIA to have a well-organized and managed program specifically designed to meet the needs of Indian students. However, our reports point out that, in addition to ineffective educational programs, BIA's organizational structure was chaotic and lacked continuity and effective leadership. For example, in a January 1977 report, we pointed out that BIA officials stated that realistic goals and education programs for improving the quality of education for Indian children had not been established because there had been a continued lack of program direction from the Office of Indian Education Programs. The officials attributed the lack of program direction to a constant turnover in the Director's position and the organizational structure which prevented the Director from dealing directly with area offices and schools. The Director, as the Commissioner's top staff assistant in education, was supposed to provide leadership and policy direction for education programs administered by BIA.

Area directors had line authority and were responsible for decisionmaking and control of day-to-day operations in their areas, including education. The Director of Indian Education Programs on the other hand only had staff authority and responsibility for providing staff support to the Commissioner in developing and managing BIA programs to provide educational opportunities to Indian youths and adults in either BIA, public, or private schools. The effectiveness of the Director's office in providing effective leadership was further hindered because during the 10-year period 1966-76, 15 different individuals held either the position of Director or Acting Director. The average length of time each individual spent in office was about 7 months. An additional change in Directors took place in 1979.

The impact the lack of line authority has had on ensuring a quality education for Indians was recognized when the Congress enacted the Education Amendments of 1978. Section 1126 of the act directed the Secretary of the Interior to transfer the responsibility for and authority over BIA education programs to the Director, Office of Indian Education Programs. This constitutes a shift in policy and procedure formulations and monitoring and evaluation control. It also includes transfer of line authority over BIA education at all BIA levels. In its Report No. 95-1137, the House Committee on Education and Labor stated that while the transfer will not affect the ultimate authority of the Secretary in any way, it

> "* * *will remove non-education personnel (area directors and agency superintendents) from control of Bureau education programs. This directive does not have the effect of either eliminating or creating jobs, though some shift of responsibility and job descriptions will probably take place at both the area and agency levels. While no separate support service for education is required, such is permitted. Those employees whose current duties are solely educationally related will become educational personnel. The Committee would view the assignment of other duties to such individuals to make their status 'noneducational' a serious violation of Congressional intent. Additionally, the Secretary shall establish practices guaranteeing education people access to other support personnel on a time sharing basis." (Underscoring added.)

On November 13, 1979, the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs issued an order implementing revised line authorities for BIA education activities. The new organizational structure which was effective as of November 15, 1979, is a dramatic change for BIA and undoubtedly will cause some serious growing pains. (Charts 1 and 2 on p. 10 illustrate the changes.) The changes will result in some area directors and agency superintendents losing control of a substantial portion of the funds provided to Indians in their area.

The committee is very concerned about the attitude of area directors and superintendents regarding the loss of control over Indian education programs. The committee stated:

> "The Committee has been extremely disturbed by reports that area directors and agency superintendents, in attempts to sabotage such a transfer and generate opposition to this measure, have informed education personnel and tribes that if such a transfer occurs, the area and agency directors will cut off or hinder needed and vital support services. The Secretary shall be mindful of these problems and shall take swift action against any individual guilty of these practices."

We fully concur with the committee's concern over the reluctance some BIA officials may have regarding the revised line authorities.

POLICY GUIDANCE

Our reports on BIA education activities pointed out that planning and policy guidance was lacking or was outdated. This situation coupled with the lack of needs assessment has contributed greatly to the poor success of BIA education programs. For example, in January 1977, we reported that the kinds of deficiencies BIA educational programs had in 1972 still existed. Our 1977 report pointed out that, as a result, there was little evidence that BIA had made progress since 1972 toward improving educational achievement of Indian children.

BIA had not communicated educational goals to its area offices and schools nor designed and implemented a specific plan for raising Indian students' academic achievement levels. In this respect BIA had not updated the goals and objectives published in its manual in 1953 and had failed

CHART 1

EDUCATION LINE AUTHORITY BEFORE PUBLIC LAW 95-561

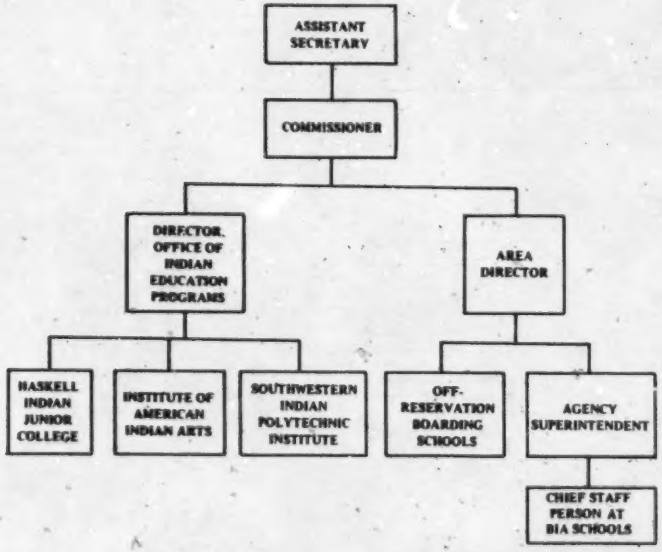
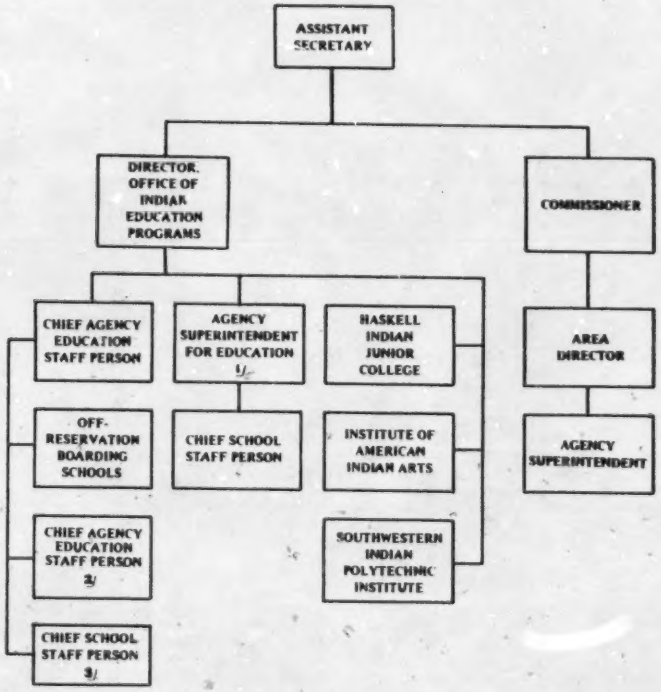


CHART 2

EDUCATION LINE AUTHORITY AFTER PUBLIC LAW 95-561



NOTES:

1. Has one or more schools or dormitories reporting to him.
2. Has no schools reporting to him.
3. Reports to chief area education staff person when no such position exist at agency level.

to define what constituted adequate Indian education for the 1970s. We recommended that an educational needs assessment be made and that plans, goals, policies, and procedures be established for meeting these needs.

In a February 1978 report, we pointed out that BIA had developed its 1979 school construction priority list without adequate comprehensive planning data and that, as a result, many schools ranked high on the priority list should not be built. One school was included on the priority construction list even though a nearby BIA school had space available.

The report also noted that Indian tribes had requested BIA to construct numerous small schools instead of more economically operated, centrally located larger schools. BIA had not opposed small school construction in nearby areas because the Director, Office of Indian Education Programs, believed that smaller schools provided more effective training as well as other cultural benefits.

The report pointed out further that although BIA did have policies on school attendance, some of them conflicted. For example, BIA's general policy to educate all students as close to their home as possible somewhat conflicted with the policy to educate students in public schools whenever adequate space was available. This problem was further compounded by the opportunities parents had to send their children to BIA boarding schools. For example, the report pointed out that a school--kindergarten through eighth grade--built in Acomita, New Mexico, to house 650 students had only 300 students after 3 years of operation. Part of the low enrollment problem appeared to be the option parents had of sending their children to other schools nearby. About 100 of the community's students were attending a nearby public junior-senior high school which was overcrowded, and 225 were being bussed to public schools about 20 miles away. The parents were allowed to choose which school their children would attend. In another February 1978 report, we pointed out that at three boarding schools within the Anadarko Area Office about 42 percent of the students whose attendance applications were reviewed came from residences outside the Anadarko area.

These problems were due in part to BIA not having a policy concerning the need for additional schools when space was available in existing BIA schools, the size of schools, and what school a student should attend when a BIA school was closer than an available school. Accordingly, we recommended that BIA establish a policy requiring the use of

available space in nearby BIA schools before new schools are built and clarify policies on school attendance boundaries.

In a September 1979 report, we pointed out that BIA had not developed comprehensive guidelines for implementing and operating the special education program mandated by the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, Public Law 94-142. Our review at two area offices showed that BIA had not made significant progress in meeting the needs of handicapped children because of poor leadership and lack of emphasis. BIA experienced delays in implementing and administering an effective program and in identifying and evaluating handicapped children needing special education. BIA had also experienced delays in recruiting and hiring needed special education personnel. Accordingly, we recommended that BIA develop policies and guidelines for delivering special education services mandated by the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975.

Congressional action to strengthen education policies

The Congress recognized that many changes were needed in order for BIA to improve the delivery of Indian education services in passing the Educational Amendments of 1978. Title XI of the 1978 act requires numerous actions to improve educational policies, procedures, and practices. These changes must be accomplished within timeframes established by the act. Specifically, title XI directs that:

--BIA promulgate comprehensive education policies, procedures, and practices to guide future actions in education.

--The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs carry out BIA educational functions through the Director, Office of Indian Education Programs.

--BIA facilitate Indian control of all matters relating to education.

--BIA develop rules and regulations to ensure Indian student rights.

BIA efforts to implement actions required by Public Law 95-561

To implement the provisions of the act, BIA established the Task Force on Indian Education Policies to develop the policies, procedures, regulations, and guidelines needed for administering all BIA education programs, including the

operation of the BIA school system. These policies which were promulgated on October 9, 1979, cover many areas, including student assessment, choice of schools, higher education, and student rights. These policies state that BIA's mission is to provide quality education opportunities from early childhood through life in accordance with the Tribes' needs for cultural and economic well-being in keeping with the wide diversity of Indian Tribes and Alaska Native villages as distinct cultural and governmental entities. The regulations require BIA to

--not establish a new policy or change an existing one without consulting with the affected Tribe and Alaska Native government entities;

--ensure that Indian Tribes and Alaska Native entities fully exercise self-determination and control in planning, ranking or prioritizing, developing, managing, staffing, and evaluating all aspects of the education process;

--require each school to establish its attendance area in cooperation with neighboring schools;

--establish and maintain a program of research and development to provide accurate and culturally specific assessment instruments to measure student performance in cooperation with Tribes and Alaska Native entities; and

--provide day and residential educational services as close to an Indian or Alaska Native student's home as possible, except when a student elects to attend a school elsewhere for specialized curricular offerings or services.

In September 1979, BIA revised and updated its basic education program manual. This manual describes policies, procedures, goals, and objectives relating to all aspects of providing educational services to Indians. Although the manual provides information on BIA's organization, personnel, and standards, the manual has not been revised to incorporate changes mandated by Public Law 95-561. Thus, the manual will need to be updated after the various task forces complete their work and final regulations are promulgated.

BASIC EDUCATION STANDARDS

Our reports generally pointed out that adequate criteria and realistic goals and objectives were lacking or outdated

for many aspects of Indian education. For example, in January 1977, we reported that there was little evidence that BIA had made progress in accomplishing its major goal of closing the education gap between Indians and non-Indians by raising the academic achievement levels of Indian students to the national average by 1976. BIA had not advised its area offices and schools of the goal and had not designed programs to achieve the goal. We also noted that BIA had not updated the goals and objectives to reflect more accurately what constituted adequate Indian education for the 1970s. Moreover, our January 1977 report noted that BIA had not designed programs and procedures for implementing and apprising operating levels of its prior goal of closing the educational gap or its revised goal of providing opportunities for equal educational achievement. BIA officials stated that the goals were not realistic and that BIA did not have a comprehensive education program to meet established goals and objectives.

Our Janauary 1977 report repeated the substance of the recommendations made in a 1972 report that BIA be required to

--determine the educational needs of Indian students,

--establish realistic goals and objectives for meeting the needs and communicate the goals and objectives to all BIA operating levels, and

--develop a comprehensive educational program to overcome the obstacles which impede progress in meeting established goals and objectives.

In February 1978, we reported that BIA had not established appropriate utilization criteria (required space per pupil) or optimum capacities for boarding schools. BIA had not established funding and staffing criteria for boarding schools. Six off-reservation boarding schools we visited were underutilized even when compared to BIA's most conservative capacity estimates. This situation resulted in these schools' per-pupil cost and staff-student ratios varying significantly. Some of the schools we reviewed had totally unused facilities, and partially full classrooms were typical. In some cases the underutilization resulted in the destruction of equipment and facilities.

We recommended that BIA improve the operating efficiency of its boarding schools by

--developing space utilization, staffing, and funding criteria for boarding schools that will ensure efficient operation and meet the educational needs of Indian children and

--consolidating boarding schools into the minimum number of facilities needed to meet the above criteria.

In a September 1979, report we pointed out that BIA had established unrealistic goals for meeting the special education program mandated by the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. BIA's goal for the 1978-79 school year was to provide special education services to all handicapped Indian children, but the Navajo and Phoenix areas were providing full services to less than 40 percent of their handicapped students during the 1978-79 school year. Accordingly, we recommended that BIA develop realistic goals to meet the special education program mandated by the 1975 act.

Congressional action to improve education standards

Title XI of the Education Amendments of 1978 requires BIA to develop minimum academic and other standards for Indian schools and dormitories. It requires BIA to conduct studies and surveys covering academic needs, local cultural differences, language skills, geographic isolation, and pupil-teacher ratios to establish and revise standards for the basic education of Indian children attending BIA schools and Indian-controlled contract schools. The 1978 act directs BIA to develop and publish minimum academic standards for Indian education to apply to BIA schools, Indian-controlled contract schools, and as a model for Indian children in public schools.

Title XI also requires BIA to conduct a study of the costs of boarding Indian students in BIA-operated schools and Indian-controlled contract schools for the purpose of establishing national criteria for dormitory situations. The criteria must include adult-child ratios, needs for counselors, space, and privacy.

BIA efforts to implement actions required by Public Law 95-561

BIA's Task Force on Education/Living Standards was responsible for identifying the actions needed to comply with the legislation and develop appropriate guidelines and

regulations. The task force with the assistance of the Task Force on Policies developed and published education standards for comment in September 1979. Although the education standards are only in draft form and subject to revisions, they address many areas where we recommended that improvements were needed. For example, the draft standards require each BIA school to conduct a thorough needs assessment once every 3 years. Prior to each school year, each BIA school must do an interim needs assessment based upon data from the previous year's evaluation.

Each BIA school must conduct an evaluation at the end of the school year to measure the effectiveness of the school's curriculum and instruction in meeting the needs identified by the needs assessment done at the beginning of the year. Finally, each BIA school must have an education plan based upon the needs assessment which will translate the needs of the local schools into programs designed to provide educational opportunities to meet the needs of the individual students. This plan must include goals, priorities, policies, and strategies each school should follow and be updated yearly.

BIA contracted with the Native American Research Associates for a study of support service standards and related costs of BIA- and Indian-controlled contract schools. In November 1979, the Native American Research Associates issued the study of national costs for attending each BIA-operated on-and-off reservation residential school, contract-operated residential facilities, and peripheral dormitories. During that same month they also submitted a draft of standards for support service areas, including pupil services, home living, food services, pupil transportation, general operations, facilities management and modification for handicapped access. The draft was submitted to BIA for review before final standards are established. The standards provide for

--an annual physical and dental examination and immunization certification before school admission;

--the availability of one full-time certified psychologist for every 300 students or one per school where enrollment is less than 300;

--two students per room (125 square feet per occupant) which is the desired situation; and

--the local school supervisor to annually review the use and serviceability of all buildings, grounds, and instructional equipment and to report the status and recommendations for improvement to the school board.

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The lack of reliable or, in many cases, any statistics and data concerning the conditions of Indian education, the manner in which Federal program dollars are expended, and the lack of any realistic assessment of Indian needs have been discussed and documented by the American Indian Policy Review Commission, the Congressional Research Service, and various committees and subcommittees of the Congress, in addition to most of our reports. For example, during April 1978 hearings on S. 2712, 95th Congress, cited as the Indian Program Evaluation and Needs Assessment Act, the Chairman, Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs stated that:

> "The lack of information has in the past severely hampered the Congress in evaluating the effectiveness of Federal Indian programs, and the effectiveness and performance of the Federal agencies administering them."

Since 1972, several of our reports on BIA education programs have pointed out the need for an effective management information system. The lack of reliable information prevents effective needs assessment and makes it virtually impossible to measure progress in such areas as educational achievement of Indian students. Also, because Federal agencies do not have reliable information, they cannot determine effectively whether funds appropriated for Federal programs and services for Indians are being used properly.

In an April 1972 report, we stated that BIA records did not contain sufficient information for determining the actual progress in identifying students' needs and measuring their progress, nor did BIA have an overall student-testing program for obtaining such information. Also education program officials in the central office did not know how much of the total operating costs had been incurred by each of BIA's 200 schools, 76 agency offices, and 11 area offices; nor did they receive any financial management reports which would readily provide this data. In addition, the central office had not received financial management reports which would show how much of the operating costs had been incurred for such education activities as administration, curriculum

development, instruction, pupil personnel services, support services, and dormitory operations.

In a January 1977 followup report we pointed out that BIA had made some changes in its management information system since our 1972 report. The system, however, still did not provide education program managers with the information they needed to (1) assess the specific educational needs of Indian students, (2) identify the major problems that must be dealt with, (3) devise the specific strategy for overcoming these problems, (4) implement an educational program responsive to students' needs, (5) measure progress toward goals, and (6) assess the effectiveness of each responsible level within the BIA school system in achieving educational goals.

We recommended that BIA develop a management information system that would provide

--meaningful and comprehensive information on the academic aptitude and achievement levels of students in the BIA school system and

--program-oriented financial management reports geared toward the management needs of BIA education program officials.

In a November 1977 report on BIA's higher education grant programs for Indians, we recommended that the Secretary of the Interior direct BIA to:

--Develop and implement a system for gathering information on Indian students and the colleges they attend to help these students plan their education. The information should include high school courses taken, achievement test scores, career goals, college grade point averages, the number of students not continuing their education, and the number of graduates. Information should be obtained on support services--such as counseling, tutoring, and remedial programs--at postsecondary educational institutions.

In February 1978 we issued a report on boarding school operations in which we repeated the essence of our earlier recommendations. We specifically recommended that BIA develop a management information system that will provide information with which to monitor program expenditures and/or determine need for detailed evaluations.

Congressional action to strengthen BIA's management information system for education

The Congress has recognized that better information is needed to ensure more effective delivery of educational services to Indians. The House Committee on Education and Labor stated in its Report No. 95-1137 that currently the lack of available information hinders accurate budget proposals and justification, policy evaluation, and formulation or program monitoring.

Section 1132 of the Education Amendments of 1978, Public Law 95-561, requires that within 1 year after the date of enactment, the Secretary of the Interior was to have established a computerized information system which will coordinate information between the agencies, areas, and the central office. Information stored must cover figures for at least six areas for all BIA schools--student enrollment, curriculum, staff, facilities, community demographics, and student assessment information.

BIA efforts to implement actions required by Public Law 95-561

The Education Management Information System Task Force was established to modify and improve the existing information systems' capabilities and develop new capabilities or enhancements to meet the requirements of the act. In July 1979, the task force developed a written plan for implementing the system. This plan provides for student accounting (enrollment and attendance data), student assessment (test scores and performance analysis), academic/academic support (curriculum), facilities management, personnel, finance, adult education, student scheduling, and community demographics.

As of January 1980, the system was already providing student enrollment information. The task force leader stated that BIA was planning to input data on the facilities management information in early February with the first reports to be issued by the end of the month. Information on community demographics, staff personnel by program, location and school directories are anticipated to be added in about another 60 days. He stated that student assessment information would probably not be in operation until next fall, with no present estimate on when curriculum may be added.

INDIAN EDUCATION FUNDING

Our January 1977 report pointed out that BIA had not determined the educational needs of Indian students so that

appropriate programs could be designed to meet the needs. The House Committee on Education and Labor reported in May 1978 that BIA had failed to distribute education program funds on a basis of need. In an effort to deal with these problems title XI of the Education Amendments of 1978, Public Law 95-561, required changes in the funding mechanisms for BIA education programs and school operation.

A process called band analysis has been used since 1970 to provide an opportunity for tribal participation in BIA's budget system and program funding decisions. This process gives tribal officials an opportunity to set funding priorities among many of BIA's operational programs at constrained funding levels. The band analysis is intended to change the mix of programs according to individual tribal needs and funding priorities. BIA officials, however, are responsible for assuring that adequate funds are available for required Federal trust responsibilities and essential BIA services.

Band analysis forms are prepared for each of BIA's 82 agencies and 12 area offices as well as for other specialized field installations. Tribal participation and input in the budget process are greatest at the agencies. Tribal officials may prepare the band analysis and develop a fiscal year financial program plan at their respective agencies. BIA's central office consolidates, without substantive alternations, the area, agency and other field location band analyses and should include identified tribal funding priorities in BIA's fiscal year budget estimates and justifications.

In February 1978, we reported that tribal participation and effective tribal input in BIA's fiscal year 1979 funding decisions varied from total involvement to none at all. Therefore, the 1979 budget represented some, but not all, tribal funding priorities.

Title XI requires BIA to develop an allotment formula for determining and allocating minimum amounts of funds to sustain BIA and contract schools. The formula will consider such things as the number of students, size of school, and other special cost factors such as school isolation, special staffing, and transportation. Title XI also requires BIA to adopt a system and develop regulations for direct funding and support of all BIA and contract schools. The system will allocate funds according to the above formula and will provide for notifying each school of the allotment size by the end of the preceding school year. This system is not subject to the band analysis.

In response to the mandates of title XI, BIA established a 16-member Task Force on the Allotment Formula to develop the formula and regulations for funding and supporting BIA and

contract schools. The task force, which included 9 Indians, had 6 BIA employees and 10 members who were not. In October 1979, BIA promuglated regulations that established the "Indian School Equalization Formula" for allocating BIA educational funds to schools for elementary and secondary education and established separate categorical funds for contingencies, school board training, student transportation, administration, maintenance and minor repair of school facilities, prekindergarten programs, and operation and maintenance of contract schools.

The regulations include provisions which are designed to

--equalize education allocations according to individual student needs,

--provide uniform direct funding to BIA and contract schools in relation to their students' needs, and

--establish managerial and fiscal systems for receipt and expenditure of educational funds.

Funds for the instruction and residential care of Indian children shall be earned as an entitlement by each local school according to a weighted student unit formula. Students in different programs or in different grade levels are counted or weighted differently based on average cost differences necessary to provide for quality programs. Different weights are assigned for different instructional and residential programs to create weighted student units. Small schools and Alaskan schools are eligible under the formula to generate supplemental student units for each school. The number of units is then multiplied by a base dollar figure to determine each school's entitlement.

The regulations include procedures for providing direct funding, calculating student unit entitlements, compliance requirements, and phase-in provisions. The rules provide for establishing two separate contingency funds to (1) reimburse schools for costs due to unforeseen disasters and (2) facilitate implementing the formula. The regulations provide for earmarking a fixed amount of money for each school board to use for its training needs. A transportation formula was established by the regulations to offset the varying costs of transporting students to and from school.

As required by title XI, fiscal year 1980 funds were allocated in accordance with the new formula.

STAFFING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Inadequate staffing has been a continuing problem in the Federal management of Indian programs. All but a few of the Indian programs we have reviewed appeared to be plagued with a shortage of adequate or knowledgeable staff to properly operate all aspects of the program. For example in our January 1977 report, we found that the lack of program direction within BIA was attributed to constant turnover in the position of Director, Office of Indian Education Programs. This position was held by 15 different people during the 10-year period, 1966-76.

Another factor which has hindered Indian education was the availability of substitute teachers to assume responsibility for classes when regular teachers were absent. Our April 1972 report pointed out that 10 out of 12 schools we visited did not have adequate provisions for obtaining substitute teachers. Again in January 1977 we reported that officials at seven schools stated that they were having problems hiring substitute teachers. These officials blamed the problem on complicated procedures that must be followed in hiring substitute teachers and the lack of qualified teachers in nearby communities. Officials at two area offices said that a more serious problem was unfilled teaching positions at the start of the school year. The reasons given for this problem were

--the long process of complying with civil service hiring regulations;

--slow BIA processing of necessary paperwork; and

--the reality that BIA teachers, as civil service employees, can quit, retire, or transfer on short notice, thereby creating a vacancy.

In contrast, teachers in the public school system sign contracts which commit them to work the entire school year.

In a report on BIA special education programs issued in September 1979, we found that the Navajo and Phoenix areas did not have sufficient special education personnel to provide services to all identified handicapped students. Area office officials stated that it was difficult to hire special education personnel because the career opportunities are unattractive, the working and living conditions are poor at many of the schools, and special education teachers are in high demand. Accordingly, we recommended that BIA determine the number of special education personnel needed by

each location and develop a plan to hire those personnel at the earliest possible date.

The House Committee on Education and Labor reported in May 1978, that BIA's personnel system breeds delays and vacancies in the recruitment of education personnel. As a result, title XI contains provisions requiring a new education personnel system. The legislation directs BIA to develop regulations covering personnel policies for education positions, including compensation, appointments, and leave. The legislation also exempts BIA educators and education positions from the civil service regulations.

BIA established the Task Force on Personnel to develop the personnel regulations required by title XI. In November 1979, BIA promulgated final regulations which defined education positions and the terms and conditions of employment and established a system for recruiting, employing, and paying teachers and other personnel in BIA-operated schools.

Generally the regulations provide for local BIA school employees to be appointed by the school supervisor after consulting with the school board. According to the regulations, BIA can issue employment contracts for each school year when filling education positions at the agency and school levels. One of the more significant changes is that Indian preference laws do not apply to filling an education position if each tribal organization concerned grants, in writing, a waiver of such laws. According to the regulations, educators can be discharged for cause and for inadequate performance as long as they are accorded due process.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION CRITERIA

In a February 1978 report, we pointed out that BIA estimated that as of January 1978 about $300 million would be needed to renovate or construct school facilities for educating Indian children. We stated that much of this expenditure could be avoided if Indian children enroll in nearby BIA or public schools. If new school facilities are needed in some locations, BIA could save money by constructing larger, centrally located schools rather than smaller, scattered schools with less enrollment.

We also stated that BIA had not developed comprehensive planning information on the school needs of Indian children and therefore could not readily determine size and location of school facilities--when or where they were needed. We recommended that the Secretary of the Interior direct the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs to

--compare the costs and cultural and academic benefits of constructing small, scattered schools as opposed to larger, centralized schools before schools are scheduled for construction;

--enforce BIA's policy of having Indian children attend nearby public schools where adequate facilities are available;

--establish a policy which would require use of available space in nearby BIA schools before new schools are built;

--require comprehensive planning data to justify school construction priorities;

--require verification of data on all construction request applications before including them on school construction priority lists; and

--clarify and enforce BIA's policies on school attendance boundaries.

In another February 1978 report dealing with boarding schools we also covered certain aspects relative to the need for construction of Indian schools. We recommended that BIA: develop criteria for space utilization, staffing, and funding for boarding schools that will ensure efficient operation and that the educational needs of Indian children are met. We also recommended that BIA consolidate boarding schools into the minimum number of facilities needed to meet the criteria.

Congressional action taken to improve BIA's education facilities

The House Committee on Education and Labor stated in its report No. 95-1137 that Indian education facilities posed an extreme danger to the health and safety of the children. Accordingly, the committee included specific requirements in title XI of Public Law 95-561 for repair and construction of BIA school facilities. The act requires the publication of a system for setting school construction priorities and a current project priority list in the Federal Register and the annual budget submission to the Congress. It also requires that all schools, dormitories, and other facilities operated by BIA or under contract be brought up to applicable health and safety standards. In addition, each annual budget request should include a plan to bring the school facilities into compliance with all applicable Federal, tribal, or State health and safety standards.

BIA efforts to implement actions required by Public Law 95-561

On May 22, 1979, BIA published a notice in the Federal Register describing the system it would use in setting school construction priorities. A survey was made to identify all BIA school facilities which needed to be brought up to applicable health and safety standards. A BIA official stated that a priority list for school construction should be completed soon and that the budget request for fiscal year 1981 includes plans to bring various school facilities up to applicable standards.

Regulations on the Indian School Equalization Program (25 CFR Part 31 h) were published in the Federal Register in October 1979 and are designed to provide the funding criteria that will ensure efficient operation of Indian schools. A BIA official pointed out that the equalization funding formula provides incentives to maintain adequate pupil enrollment, since funding is based on enrollment. Where enrollment does not justify funding for a school under the equalization program, schools will have to be consolidated. A BIA official stated that tribal self-determination prevents BIA from closing or consolidating schools without tribal support.

CONCLUSIONS

BIA is developing and implementing some very positive changes which should result in more effective delivery of educational services to Indians. We believe the new organizational changes which for the first time give the Director, Office of Indian Education Programs, direct line authority over education are significant. This change along with the new education personnel system and funding criteria provides an excellent opportunity for BIA to improve its education programs.

In view of these actions and others being taken in accordance with Public Law 95-561, we believe that it would be reasonable to give BIA an opportunity to see what it can accomplish. The bottom line, however, is whether the new initiatives will bring about improvement in the academic achievement levels of Indian students. We believe that a time period of at least 3 to 4 years would be needed to effectively measure changes in the academic achievement levels of Indian students. This will provide at least 2 years of data in addition to the first full year of operations under title XI. However, if adequate progress is not made or cannot be measured because of inadequate testing criteria, the

Congress will have to seriously consider other alternatives which may be available for administering Indian education programs, including taking the responsibility away from BIA.

AGENCY COMMENTS

Department officials stated that our position that a transfer of BIA's education functions to the Department of Education would not be appropriate at this time was the only reasonable position. They pointed out that although title XI mandated many actions designed to improve Indian education, some important steps were initiated prior to the legislation. They stated that BIA was already developing better school construction priorities, a higher education management information system, and new programs for the handicapped.

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OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE INDIAN EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS OPERATED BY THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

(B-161468, APR. 27, 1972)

Although improving the educational achievement levels of Indian students appeared to be one of the most important keys to overcoming the problems Indians face, information available at several BIA schools revealed relatively little evidence of progress. BIA had not communicated its education goals to the operating levels nor did it develop and implement a specific plan of action by which it intended to raise Indian students' academic-achievement levels. BIA also had not established an effective management information system to assist program managers in assessing the specific educational needs of students, in identifying the major problems that must be dealt with, in devising the specific strategy for overcoming these problems, in implementing an education program responsive to the students' needs, in measuring progress toward stated goals, and in assessing the effectiveness of each responsible level within the BIA school system in achieving the established educational goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Secretary of the Interior should require the Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1/ to:

--Clearly apprise all operating levels of the goal of reaching a level of academic achievement for Indian students equal to the national average and the date by which it is to be accomplished.

--Identify and assign priorities for dealing with all critical factors known to impede progress toward accomplishment of that goal.

--Develop a comprehensive educational program which is designed specifically to overcome the factors which impede progress in meeting the goal and which is

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1/The Commissioner of Indian Affairs position was eliminated in September 1977 at the same time the new position of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs was established.

flexible enough to meet the needs of students in all BIA-operated schools.

--Establish periodic milestones, such as the amount of improvement in the academic-achievement level necessary at the end of each successive year, to accomplish the established goal.

--Periodically evaluate program results on the basis of these predetermined milestones to allow redirections of effort as may be necessary.

--Develop a management information system providing:

1. Meaningful and comprehensive information on the academic aptitude and achievement levels of students in the BIA school system.

2. Program-oriented financial management reports geared toward the management needs of BIA education program officials.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE CONGRESS

In view of the concern which has been expressed by the President and by members of the Congress regarding the quality of Indian education, the Congress may wish to consider enacting legislation requiring BIA to furnish certain specific information which the Congress could use to evaluate the progress being made in improving Indian education. Such information could include:

--A statement of BIA's educational goals and the criteria with which BIA plans to measure progress toward these goals.

--A comprehensive plan to accomplish these goals. Such a plan should identify the critical tasks that need to be performed to reach the established goals; should assign priorities; and should include estimates of the cost for required staffing, equipment, and facilities.

--An annual report comparing actual program results with the predetermined milestones on a BIA-wide basis, as well as summary statistical data on the results achieved at each BIA-operated school. Such a report should identify progress in critical areas, such as English communication skills, and should compare

APPENDIX I

progress in these areas to overall student progress. The reasons for, and the proposed solutions to, any significant shortcomings also should be explained in the report.

CONCERTED EFFORT NEEDED TO IMPROVE INDIAN EDUCATION

(CED-77-24, JAN. 17, 1977)

This report pointed out that in April 1972 we reported that BIA needed to improve the quality of education provided by BIA schools. It also pointed out that since April 1972 BIA had done little to meet the educational needs of its students.

--Indian education for the 1970s had not been defined.

--A comprehensive educational program had not been established.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Secretary of the Interior should direct the Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1/ to:

--Determine the educational needs of Indian students, so appropriate programs can be designed to meet the needs.

--Establish realistic goals and objectives for meeting such needs and communicate the goals and objectives to all operating levels in BIA.

--Develop a comprehensive educational program which includes specific policies and procedures for dealing with problems which impede progress in meeting established goals and objectives.

--Monitor and evaluate implementation of established educational goals and programs at all operating levels of the agency.

--Develop a management information system that will provide:

1. Meaningful and comprehensive information on the academic aptitude and achievement levels of students in BIA's school system.

1/The Commissioner of Indian Affairs position was eliminated in September 1977 at the same time the new position of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs was established.

2. Program-oriented financial management reports to meet the management needs of BIA education program officials.

MATTERS FOR ATTENTION BY THE CONGRESS

Since BIA had made no major progress over several years in implementing policies, procedures, and programs to ensure that the educational needs of Indian students were met, the congressional committees should more intensively monitor BIA and, if adequate progress is not made, explore other alternatives, such as transferring responsibilities for administering Indian education programs to another Government agency.

THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS SHOULD DO MORE TO HELP EDUCATE INDIAN STUDENTS

(HRD-77-155, NOV. 3, 1977)

BIA knew little about Indian students' preparation for and performance in college or about the colleges they attend, yet it continued to spend millions of dollars each year on the higher education grant program for Indians. In fiscal year 1976 grants totaled about $33 million.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Secretary of the Interior should direct the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs to:

--Develop and implement a system for gathering information on Indian students and the colleges they attend to help these students plan their education. Student information should include high school courses taken, achievement test scores, career goals, college grade point averages, the number of students not continuing their education, and the number of graduates. Information should be obtained on support services--such as counseling, tutoring, and remedial programs--at postsecondary educational institutions.

--Concentrate on identifying and correcting deficiencies in the grant computer system, including requiring that each agency obtain the necessary information reports from its grantees.

--Encourage colleges and universities without Indian counselors to see that Indian students are receiving adequate support services.

--Develop regulations based on the higher education grants manual and require BIA personnel to follow them.

--Sufficiently staff the higher education program so that needed services can be provided to Indian students.

QUESTIONABLE NEED FOR ALL SCHOOLS PLANNED BY THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

(CED-78-55, FEB. 15, 1978)

BIA based its priorities for constructing school facilities on invalid information, thereby making its 1979 school construction priority list unreliable. Furthermore, BIA had not developed comprehensive planning information on school needs of Indian children and could not readily determine when or where school facilities were needed. BIA estimated that as of January 1978 about $300 million would be needed to renovate or construct Indian school facilities. BIA could save millions of dollars by having Indian children attend nearby public or BIA schools and by constructing larger, consolidated schools in lieu of smaller, scattered ones.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Secretary of the Interior should direct the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs to:

--Compare the costs and cultural and academic benefits of constructing small, scattered schools as opposed to larger, centralized schools before schools are scheduled for construction.

--Enforce BIA's policy of having Indian children attend nearby public schools where adequate facilities are available.

--Establish a policy which would require use of available space in nearby BIA schools before new schools are built.

--Require comprehensive planning data to justify school construction priorities.

--Require verification of data on all construction request applications before including them on school construction priority lists.

--Clarify and enforce BIA's policies on school attendance boundaries.

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS NOT OPERATING BOARDING SCHOOLS EFFICIENTLY

(CED-78-56, FEB. 15, 1978)

BIA had failed to consolidate its boarding schools to make greater use of space and equipment, to establish policies to control boarding school expenditures, and to provide for adequate staff and funds to properly maintain boarding schools. As a result, millions of dollars were being lost.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Secretary of the Interior should direct the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs to:

--Instruct area offices, agency offices, and boarding schools to follow established eligibility criteria and admission procedures.

--Develop space utilization, staffing and funding criteria for boarding schools that will ensure efficient operation and that the educational needs of Indian children are met.

--Consolidate boarding schools into the minimum number of facilities needed to meet the above criteria.

--Dispose of unneeded facilities, buildings, and equipment in accordance with established procedures.

--Include provisions for linking procurements to specific educational needs in developing comprehensive educational programs.

--Develop a system that will provide information with which to monitor program expenditures and/or determine need for detailed evaluations.

--Monitor and evaluate expenditures of funds at the school level periodically.

--Reevaluate staffing and funding of maintenance at Navajo area boarding schools and the adjustment necessary to ensure that these facilities are maintained adequately.

--Implement plans to decentralize and simplify the Navajo area maintenance system.

THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS IS SLOW IN PROVIDING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES TO ALL HANDICAPPED INDIAN CHILDREN

(CED-79-121, SEPT. 4, 1979)

This report pointed out BIA's failure to make progress in achieving the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 mandate of providing a free and appropriate public education to all handicapped children. It also points out that BIA failed to hire 202 special education teachers and specialists provided for by the Congress in appropriating an additional $5 million in fiscal year 1979.

Our review of two area offices showed that BIA had experienced delays in meeting the act's requirements to serve all handicapped children. BIA experienced delays in implementing and administering an effective program, identifying and evaluating the handicapped children needing special education, and recruiting and hiring needed special education personnel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Secretary of the Interior should direct the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs to:

--Determine the number of special education personnel needed by each location and develop a plan to hire those personnel at the earliest possible date.

--Develop policies, guidelines, and realistic goals to meet the mandate of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, for delivery of special education services to all handicapped children in BIA-operated schools.

ALTERNATIVES FOR THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

PUBLIC SCHOOL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(CED-79-112, SEPT. 6, 1979)

This report assessed BIA's administration of the basic support and tuition portions of the Johnson O'Malley program authorized by Public Law 73-167, as amended, April 16, 1934. It also identified alternatives for the Congress to consider in deciding the basic support program's future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If the Congress decides that BIA should continue administering the basic support programs, the Secretary of the Interior should direct the Assistant Secretay for Indian Affairs to:

--Develop adequate criteria for determining whether basic support program funds are meeting the educational needs of Indian students attending public schools.

--Seek legislative clarification from the Congress on whether basic support program funds should be used to meet the minimum or higher educational standards and requirements of States.

--Strengthen the BIA's procedures and practices to ensure that schools and school districts meet established criteria to qualify for funding.

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